

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY**  
**PEDESTRIAN AND TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Erwin Mack, Chairperson**  
**Colleen Mitchell, Vice-chairperson**  
Annual Report 2010  
DRAFT (1/17/11)

## **I. Introduction to the Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee**

### **Origin and Purpose**

In response to record numbers of pedestrian fatalities in Montgomery County in the late 1990s, County Executive Douglas Duncan appointed the *Blue Ribbon Panel on Pedestrian and Traffic Safety* in the summer of 2000. The panel developed a plan to improve pedestrian and traffic safety in the county through education, enforcement, engineering, and legislation. One key recommendation called for establishing a formal committee appointed by the County Executive. The *Montgomery County Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee* was established by Council Resolution 14-1281 on May 23, 2002. (amended 10/11/05).

Pedestrian safety continues to be a top priority for the County. In December, 2007, County Executive Isiah Leggett issued a seven-point strategic plan for reducing pedestrian-related collisions and making our communities safer, more walkable, and more livable.

The committee was renamed to the Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (PTSAC) by the County Council in 2008.

The purpose of the Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (PTSAC) is to:

- advise the County Executive and County Council on the status of the implementation of the Pedestrian Safety Initiative
- provide advice to elected officials on the priorities and needs for pedestrians and bicyclists
- identify issues regarding pedestrian and bicycle safety that need to be addressed

### **Membership**

There are 17 members of the PTSAC appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council to serve three-year terms. Eight members of the PTSAC include representatives from the organizations/agencies listed below (the 2010 representatives are shown in parentheses):

- Police (Ct. Thomas Didone)
- Public Works and Transportation (Arthur Holmes, Jr.)
- Montgomery County Public Schools (James D'Andrea)
- Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (David Anspacher)
- Regional service centers (Reemberto Rodriguez)
- Montgomery Chapter of the MD Municipal League (Rockville City Councilmember, John B. Britton)
- County Council (Valerie Ervin represented by Richard Romer)
- MD State Highway Administration (Peter Moe)

The remaining nine seats are the Public-at-Large, representing various communities and viewpoints, including one bicycle advocate. The nine at-large members in 2010 included:

- Erwin Mack, Chair
- Colleen Mitchell, Co-Chair
- Ramin Assa
- Darrell Droblich
- Steven Friedman (bicycle advocate)
- Alan Migdall
- Alyce Ortuzar
- David Sharp
- Jack Strausman

A staff person from the Montgomery County Department of Transportation's Office of the Director is assigned to facilitate and coordinate the PTSAC. Jeff Dunckel, Pedestrian Safety Coordinator, has served in this role since June 2008.

### **Pedestrian Safety Initiative**

The Pedestrian Safety Initiative issued by County Executive Isiah Leggett establishes goals to:

- Reduce pedestrian-related crashes, injuries, fatalities and their associated social and economic costs
- Ensure that all areas of the County provide safe and convenient travel options for pedestrians<sup>1</sup>

The Pedestrian Initiative details seven strategies (outlined below) to meet these goals, and establishes timeframes and budgets to achieve each strategy.

*Pedestrian Safety Initiative Strategies:*

**Strategy 1:** Target pedestrian safety improvements in High Incidence Areas

**Strategy 2:** Assess and improve pedestrian network and connectivity needs

**Strategy 3:** Increase emphasis on pedestrians and bicyclists during the planning process

**Strategy 4:** Identify and implement corridor and intersection modifications and traffic calming treatments

**Strategy 5:** Upgrade pedestrian signals

**Strategy 6:** Assess and enhance street lighting

"My Pedestrian Safety Initiative outlines a strategic plan that protects the lives of our families, those who walk, those who bicycle, and -- yes -- those who drive...Every resident deserves a truly walkable community, and I am committed to improving the pedestrian environment for future generations."

- Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett, press conference 9/8/2008

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.mcgov.org/Apps/Council/PressRelease/PR\\_details.asp?PrID=4119](http://www.mcgov.org/Apps/Council/PressRelease/PR_details.asp?PrID=4119)

**Strategy 7:** Modify pedestrian and driver behavior through enhanced enforcement and educational efforts

The Pedestrian Safety Program prioritizes funding for specific projects identified in the Initiative, and is supported by input from CountyStat and the PTSAC. Implementation of the full initiative is estimated at approximately \$4.8 million in recurring annual costs. Continuing budget constraints have slowed implementation and increased the importance of prioritizing projects that will best serve the County's residents. At the November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010 meeting, the PTSAC reviewed a list of Pedestrian Safety Program components. An open discussion was held regarding criteria for prioritizing various projects and initiatives in light of additional anticipated budget cuts. The committee members generally agreed that projects with proven success and the greatest impact on improving pedestrian safety should be prioritized. Members expressed support for MCDOT's top five recommended priorities including:

- Safe Routes to School
- Traffic Calming
- HIAs: Targeted Engineering, Education, Enforcement
- Speed and Red Light Camera Programs
- New Sidewalk and Bikeway Construction

## **II. Year in Review**

### **Meetings and procedures in 2010**

As a general rule, the Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee meets every other month on the first Thursday of the month at 7:00 PM for two and a half hours. Additional meetings are added if needed. The PTSAC met six times in 2010 on the following dates:

- January 7
- March 4
- May 6
- July 1
- September 16
- November 4

In addition to formal meetings, discussions on specific topics occurred via email and phone.

### **Subcommittees**

In 2009, several subcommittees were formed to focus on specific topical areas. The subcommittees allow more technical topics that cannot be adequately addressed in the time allotted for meetings to be investigated by a smaller group which reports back to the full committee. In 2010 each of the subcommittees conducted substantial research and completed tasks as described below.

- **Traffic Calming. Chair, John Britton**

In July 2010, the Speed Humps Subcommittee submitted a recommendation to the PTSAC regarding the County's current policy on the use of speed humps. After review of the pros and cons of speed humps (correct terminology is humps, not bumps), the subcommittee

recommended and the full committee approve the continued placement and use of speed humps in residential neighborhoods consistent with the current County notice and neighborhood involvement procedures. The subcommittee also recommended that the County research and explore the use of a recent entrant in the field of traffic mitigation – the speed “lumps” which are spaced in such a way so as to slow traffic but also accommodate the passage of emergency vehicles.

- **Sidewalks. Chair, Ramin Assa**

The Sidewalks Subcommittee is focused on studying the condition of sidewalks in Montgomery County, and identifying and recommending projects and technologies that will improve walkability and safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and people with mobility limitations. Projects may include construction of new sidewalks, connectivity improvements, maintenance and lighting, as well as a county-wide assessment of the existing sidewalk network and crossing facilities. The goal of the subcommittee is to propose projects and policies that will provide safe walking environments to facilitate efficient access to school and employment sites, shopping and medical centers, recreation, bus stops and Metrorail stations.

- **Bicycle Access and Safety. Chair, Steve Friedman; Co-Chair, Peter Moe**

The Bicycle Access and Safety (BAS) Subcommittee was formed to address issues pertinent to the bicycling community to enable greater access and safer passage on county roads where bicycles are permitted. The subcommittee focuses on: improvements that have countywide implications; reducing conflict between motorists and bicyclists; creating opportunities for people to convert car trips into bicycles where possible. In the past year, the members of the subcommittee participated in meetings regarding the impact of BRAC activities on bicyclists, and commented on the planned reconfiguration of the streets at the entrances to the National Institutes of Health and the National Naval Medical Center. The subcommittee also submitted a letter to the Intergovernmental Council in support of changes to state law that would benefit bicyclists. The proposed changes resulted in the repeal of the mandatory shoulder use law, and enacting the three-foot passing bill, modifying the law enabling bicyclists to legally ride across sidewalks and providing greater emphasis of bicyclists' needs in determining funding for building or road construction.

Results of 2010 Maryland General Assembly session:

- SB 51- Three Foot Bicycle Safety Bill: Requires motorists to pass bicycles and devices like motor scooters at a safe distance of three feet.
- SB 624 and HB 1193: Repeal of the mandatory shoulder use law. The new law allows cyclists to ride in the lane if the cyclist deems the shoulder to be unsafe for use.
- HB 282: Bicycle and Pedestrian Access, Funding and Reporting - Requires the Maryland Department of Transportation to ensure a balance funding for specified transportation projects for pedestrians and bicyclists and to ensure that the Statewide 20-year Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan is revised whenever the Maryland Transportation Plan is revised.
- SB 760 and HB 1155: Smarter Transportation Choices for Maryland Bill - Requires the establishment of criteria for state transportation projects and create regional reviews of projects.
- SB 229 and HB 710: Blue Ribbon Commission on Maryland Transportation Funding - The commission will issue an interim report by January 1, 2011 and a final report by January 1, 2012.

- **HB 786: Sidewalk or Bicycle Pathway Construction** - Requires the State Highway Administration to give prioritized consideration and funding to sidewalk or bicycle pathway construction under certain circumstances.

- **Innovative Pedestrian Network Engineering. Chair, Alan Migdall**

This subcommittee was formed to explore ways to achieve better performance from our existing pedestrian and bicycle transportation infrastructure. Subcommittee members met with staff from the county's transportation and planning departments to better understand and how to address issues such as poor connectivity, pedestrians crossing without following signals or marked. Rather than focus on individual locations or technologies, the subcommittee is taking a broader approach, looking at the problem from a network function level. If users (pedestrians) consider facilities as inefficient, it is likely to result in lower compliance and ultimately reduced safety. To better understand overall functionality of the pedestrian network, the subcommittee hoped to conduct a review of existing pedestrian and bike facilities. However, the County does not currently have a comprehensive inventory of these facilities in an easy-to-use format. The conclusion of the subcommittee was that a formal inventory is needed, which is in-line with one the County Executive's goals in the original pedestrian initiative. A county-wide inventory is very resource-intensive and well beyond currently available budgets. To implement the needed inventory in an achievable fashion the subcommittee is proposing that the inventory be done on a restricted/smaller, high-priority area as a pilot before extending it to other parts of the County.

## **Program Reviews**

- **Pedestrian Safety Review with County Executive**

Several PTSAC members met with the Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett on the evening of February 2nd, 2010. The PTSAC had 30 minutes to share the work of the committee over the past year. The following topics were reviewed:

- Electronic opportunities to gather information for the PTSAC
- The role of the Council representative
- Traffic Calming/Speed Humps
- Need for sidewalks
- Bicycle concerns
- The recent ADA challenge when using sidewalks

- **County Council Review**

In June of 2010, Council Vice President Valerie Ervin submitted a request for a status update on Montgomery County's pedestrian safety efforts. On October 21st, the PTSAC was represented at the Council's joint Public Safety and Transportation, Energy, Infrastructure and Environment (T&E) work session to provide an overview of the County's pedestrian safety programs. The Department of Transportation and Police Department put together a presentation, and Committee Chair, Erwin Mack, provided comments on the PTSAC's tasks and contributions to the County's pedestrian safety initiative. The Council was encouraged by the continued success of the programs and the PTSAC's work and dedication to pedestrian safety.

### **III. Looking Forward**

In the coming year, the PTSAC will continue to assist and advise the County in the implementation of the County's pedestrian safety efforts as defined in the County Executive's Pedestrian Safety Initiative. Accomplishing the County's pedestrian safety goals will require sustained emphasis on adequate resources. The PTSAC strongly believes that sustained emphasis on pedestrian safety is a key element of creating more livable communities and will continue to advise the County Executives and Council on accomplishing our shared priorities.